



Magistrates Help Out at MedWish

By Magistrate Ann Weatherhead
Cuyahoga County Domestic Relations Court

On Wednesday, April 28, 18 magistrates from all over Ohio moved and sorted mountains. Their efforts, combined with the work of hundreds of others, will have an impact across the world.

Your Board has decided that the OAM ought to try to leave each city or town where we have our Spring and Fall Conferences better off than it was before we came, beyond the money we spend while we are there. It is the Board's hope that community outreach of this sort will raise the profile of the OAM and reflect well on magistrates in general. We chose MedWish International for our first foray into volunteer work.

MedWish, located in East Cleveland, takes medical supplies donated by hospitals and individuals that would otherwise be thrown away, and makes them available to developing countries. The organizations are not charged for the materials they receive. Their only cost is the expense of transporting the supplies.

MedWish's collection and distribution of medical supplies serves local and international goals. Locally, it drastically reduces the amount of solid waste that would wind up in Ohio landfills and serves as a resource for local healthcare professionals and charitable organizations interested in global health. Globally, it improves the quality of medical care available to those living in poor countries.

Because it had relationships with humanitarian aid providers in Haiti before the January 12 earthquake, MedWish was able to ascertain the needs of the region and respond efficiently and quickly. It also has ongoing projects in Argentina, Egypt, El Salvador, Honduras and many other countries.

When we arrived at the MedWish warehouse, we were greeted by Andres Perez Charneco, who showed us a short film about the organization and its mission. We then split into two groups, which I'll call the Brains and the Brawns. The Brains sorted medical equipment into

bins according to its purpose: "pediatrics," "needles and syringes" and so on. The Brawns packed donated items into boxes and stacked them on pallets to consolidate them, and clear space for MedWish's fundraiser, the Band-Aid Bash, which was held onsite on May 15.

It has been said that the sign of a good settlement agreement is when both parties are equally unhappy. In our work as Magistrates we rarely have "satisfied customers." The magistrates who worked at the warehouse had a good time doing so. It was fun to get away from the sometimes gloomy adversary system at our jobs and the intellectually challenging seminars at the conference, and to quite literally "get our hands dirty." It was also a good opportunity to do physical work with magistrates we don't often see. MedWish was grateful for our hard work, both doing their day-to-day task of sorting the donated materials and helping them prepare for their big fund raiser.

It is tempting, in closing, to get preachy, "If we all do our part, yadda, yadda, yadda..." or appeal to your pragmatic side, "If you don't have many opportunities to help others, blah, blah, blah..." Instead, I encourage you to check out our next effort for yourself. If you know of a project that OAM could undertake in the greater Toledo area, (2011 Spring Conference will be at Maumee Bay,) or in Columbus (where we have our Fall Conferences), please let a board member know! 

